

Beyond The 4 Jhānas – Arūpa Samādhi (May 2016)

Q&A Forum with Ven. Dr. M. Punnaji Maha Thera

Progress of Meditation (*Bhāvanā*) through the 4 Jhānas and Arūpa Samādhi:

EMOTIONAL REALM (*Kāma-bhava*)

- Eliminating the **Five Hindrances** and progressing through the **5 constituents of Ecstasy** (*Jhāna*).

MENTAL IMAGE REALM (*Rūpa-bhava*)

- One passes through the 1st, 2nd, 3rd & 4th **ecstasies** (*Jhāna*'s);
- The gradual progress through the 4 **ecstasies** (*Jhāna*'s) is a gradual reduction of the **Subjective experience**.

IMAGELESS REALM (*Arūpa-bhava*)

This progress through the imageless realm is a gradual reduction of the **Objective experience**.

- **Realm of Infinite Space** (*Ākāsānañcāyatana*)- Emptiness of the objective experience;
- **Realm of Infinite Perception** (*Viññāṇañcāyatana*)- Emptiness of perception;
- **Realm of Nothingness** (*Ākiñcaññāyatana*)- Emptiness of all experience;
- **Realm of Neither Sensation Nor No Sensation** (*Nevasaññā nāsaññā yatana*)- The threshold of perception.

INSENTIENCE (*Avijjā*): The end of perception

Cessation of Sensation and Feeling (*Saññā Vedayita Nirodha*).

An individual in this state is similar to a dead body in having no mental activity at all, yet differs from it, due to the presence of metabolism (*ayu*) in the body, and temperature in the body (*ushna*). One will not remain in this state for more than 7 days. When one awakens from this state, one begins to become aware of how the mental process creates the world and the self one is aware of, and also how the notion of existence creates **stress and distress** (*dukkha*).

MEDITATION BEYOND THE 4 ECSTASIES (JHĀNAS)

1) Entering the Realm of Infinite Space (*Ākāsānañcāyatana*):

- When one has entered the 4th ecstasy one's attention is **focused on the subjective experience** (*upekkha*). The objective experience is empty. This empty objective experience cannot have bounds or limits and is therefore limitless or infinite. Therefore it is called the **Realm of Infinite Space**. This means to go beyond the 4th ecstasy is to enter the Realm of Infinite Space.

2) Realm of Infinite Perception (*Viññāṇañcāyatana*):

- As one proceeds further one begins to realize that the empty objective experience is in fact a subjective experience, which is also infinite. Therefore it is known as the **Realm of infinite Perception**.

3) Realm of Nothingness (*Ākiñcaññāyatana*):

- When one recognizes the emptiness of the process of perception one realizes that one is aware of nothing. This means one has entered the **realm of awareness of nothing** (*Ākiñcaññāyatana*).

4) Realm of Neither Sensation Nor No Sensation (*Nevasaññā nāsaññā yatana*):

- When one has withdrawn attention completely from the Realm of Nothingness, one enters the **threshold of perception** where one is not sure whether one is experiencing a sensation or not. Thus one enters the **Realm of Neither Sensation Nor No Sensation** (*Nevasaññā nāsaññā yatana*);
- This is not yet the complete disappearance of **Sensation** (*saññā*) and **Feeling** (*vedanā*).

Absence of Sensation and Feeling (*Saññā Vedayita Nirodha*)

- When one withdraws completely from **Sensation** (*saññā*) and **Feeling** (*vedanā*);
- Sensation and Feeling, the rudiments of the Cognitive Process, ceases;
- When this happens one has entered the state of **Absence of Sensation and Feeling** (*Saññā Vedayita Nirodha*);
- This absence of sensation and feeling is an absence of what we call the mind;
- This means the mind is not an entity separate from the body but an activity of the body;
- An activity cannot exist. It can only start, continue, and stop;
- Existence is a static concept while an activity is a dynamic process. This is why an activity cannot exist;
- Therefore this absence of the activity called mind, where there is no sensation or feeling is called **Insentience**;
- The **ascetic Siddhartha Gotama**, when he entered this state of stopping the mind and restarted this activity called mind and saw how the mental process was creating the world, the self and the distress called suffering, he became **enlightened** about **the Suffering, its cause, its end and the way leading to its end**. This was how he became a **Buddha**;
- The Buddha called this knowledge or **Enlightenment** *Vijja*;
- This knowledge or **Enlightenment** (*vijja*) began to grow from the time when the activity called mind was stopped and started again;
- When the activity called mind was stopped the **Enlightenment** (*vijja*) was absent;
- When the activity called mind was started the **Enlightenment** (*vijja*) began to grow;
- Therefore the stopping of the mind naturally becomes the **Absence of Enlightenment** (*avijjā*);
- As one emerges from **Cessation of Sensation and Feeling** (*Saññā Vedayita Nirodha*), one begins to become aware of the **Antecedental Concurrence** (*Paṭicca-samuppāda*);
- When one is fully awakened from this state of **Insentience** (*avijjā*), one has ceased to exist (*bhava*) because one goes through a paradigm shift and **Awakens from the dream of existence** (*Nirodha-samāpatti*).